



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Commissioner

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Deputy Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

February 22, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Smith and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Morna Murray, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **H.B. No. 5050 AN ACT MODERNIZING THE SYMBOL OF ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** and **S.B. No. 16 AN ACT INCREASING AGENCY EFFICIENCY IN THE REGULATION PROCESS.**

To speak first on **H.B. No. 5050**, words are important. DDS has taken many steps over the past several years to replace outdated, often unintentional disrespectful terminology with more appropriate, person-centered and person-first language. DDS has encouraged the use of respectful language through several avenues including changing the name of the department, statutory language changes and an official DDS respectful language policy which states that DDS is committed to promoting the respect and dignity of individuals who receive services from the department or its providers. The policy concerns the use of respectful and “person first” language when referring to individuals with disabilities by department employees and all persons licensed, funded or contracted by the Department of Developmental Services.

As standards of acceptable conduct have evolved, individuals who receive supports and services from DDS and its provider network have found the use of disrespectful and “non-person first” language to be offensive and a barrier to full integration into the community. DDS encourages its providers to use respectful language when referring to individuals receiving supports and services from the department. DDS staff is expected to use respectful and “person first” language at all times.

The policy, which took effect in January 2010, directed that all new and revised communications developed and distributed by DDS staff referring to persons with disabilities to refer to individuals with disabilities as a person first and avoid language that implies the person as a whole is disabled, equates a person with a medical condition or refers to adults with disabilities as children.

Governor Malloy’s proposal to modernize the symbol of access for persons with disabilities is directly in line with DDS’s policy described above. As individuals with disabilities call for modernization of terminology it makes sense that symbols be included in the discussion. We look forward to hearing from

individuals with disabilities to hear their thoughts on this proposal and we support the efforts of those who continually strive to better the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) supports [**S.B. No. 16**](#) **AN ACT INCREASING AGENCY EFFICIENCY IN THE REGULATION PROCESS** as a part of the general effort to modernize the regulation-making process in the State of Connecticut. The bill would allow Commissioners to determine if a statutory mandate is sufficient for agency enforcement purposes and whether additional regulations are needed. It would streamline and simplify the regulation process for state agencies in cases where a specific change is required by a public act or contact information needs to be updated. The bill would eliminate the requirement for a public comment period on changes to regulations that are technical such as the renaming of a state agency or when statute requires the transfer of powers and duties from one state agency to another. [**S.B. No. 16**](#) also would allow greater flexibility to an agency when emergency regulations are required by allowing the adoption of the emergency regulation without a public comment period or with an abbreviated comment period. These revisions to the regulations process would help state agencies to move forward more quickly on required regulations and allow old and obsolete regulations to be repealed promptly.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of [**H.B. No. 5050**](#) and [**S.B. No. 16**](#). You may contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066 with any questions.